DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 528 SP 041 601

AUTHOR	Hamilton, David
TITLE	Instruction in the Making: Peter Ramus and the Beginnings of Modern Schooling.
PUB DATE	1999-03-08
NOTE	18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 21-25, 2003).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; Humanism; *Language Arts; *Liberal Arts; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Ramus (Peter)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines educational practice between 1450-1650, highlighting 16th century educationist, Peter Ramus, whose work is remembered in the "History of Western Philosophy" as fostering a "pedagogic marvel." Ramus' work has received scant attention from English-speaking educationists, and his niche within the educational pantheon is unrecorded. This paper examines why Ramus' work has been screened from the attention of educationists and what the relationship is between humanism, Ramus' pedagogic marvel, and, in the words of Walter Ong, "the logic of the schools." Starting with the liberal arts, which came to prominence in the Middle Ages, the paper sketches changes that occurred between 1450-1650, linking these developments to insights about Ramus generated by Ong in 1958. Finally, the paper discusses why Ramus' work has suffered at the hands of 19th and 20th century humanist scholarship. It suggests that, under the influence of Valla, Agricola, and Ramus, among others, the language arts of the trivium were gradually transformed into the instructional methods of the Renaissance and Reformation. In turn, these methods served as paradigms in the subsequent history of modern schooling. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 477 528

Instruction in the making: Peter Ramus and the beginnings of modern schooling[1]

David Hamilton
Pedagogiska institutionen
Umeå university
901-87 Umeå
Sweden

David.hamilton@pedag.umu.se

ABSTRACT This paper focuses on educational practice between about 1450 and 1650. It suggests that, under the influence of Valla, Agricola and Ramus (among others), the language arts of the trivium were gradually transformed into the instructional methods of the Renaissance and Reformation. In turn, these methods served as paradigms in the subsequent history of modern schooling.

KEY WORDS: Schooling, trivium, pedagogy, Renaissance, Reformation, Ramus, method, curriculum, subject

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

David Hamilton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

[1] Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago 21-25 April, 2003.

SP041 601

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> When Pierre de la Ramée was a youngster toddling up and down the gentle sloping streets of the Picard village of Cuts, something had been happening to the logic of the schools. Change was in the air. Humanism was a factor affecting the change. But in what precise ways it made itself felt has always been difficult to ascertain. (Ong, 1983, p. 92)

This essay focuses on the work of a sixteenth century educationist, Peter Ramus (1515-1572). His work is remembered in the multi-volume *History of Western Philosophy* as fostering a 'pedagogic marvel' (Copenhaver & Schmitt, 1992, p. 238). After his death, Ramus' ideas took Protestant Europe 'by storm' (Brockliss, 1996, p. 582), in the form of an 'unparalleled publishing triumph' (MacLean, 2001, p. 228).

Despite these glowing evaluations from historians, Ramus' work has received scant attention from English-speaking educationists. His niche within the educational pantheon is unrecorded. He does not feature, for example, in W.H. Woodward's *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Reformers* (1897), R.H. Quick's *Essays on Educational* Reformers (1898), S.S. Laurie's *Studies in the History of Educational Opinion from the Renaissance* (1904), Paul Monroe's *A Textbook in the History of Education* (1908), or S.J. Curtis & M.E.A. Boultwood's *A Short History of Educational Ideas* (1953). Nevertheless, the publication of Walter Ong's *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958) marked a turning point. In *Education in Renaissance England* (1965) , for instance, Kenneth Charlton describes Ramus' *Dialecticae Institutiones* as 'revolutionary' and evidence of a 'new order' in the grammar schools of England. Yet, at the same time, Charlton does not analyse this new order, if only because he regarded its immediate impact as 'slight' (Charlton, 1965, p. 112).

This paper, then, attempt to fill the gap left by earlier writings. It addresses two questions: (1) why has Ramus' work been screened from the attention of educationists? And (2) what was the relationship between humanism, Ramus' pedagogic marvel and, in Ong's words, the 'logic of the schools'?

The stimulus to write this essay arises from my own efforts to understand the beginnings of modern schooling (see also Hamilton, 1989). Between about 1450 and 1650, a cluster of words, including syllabus, class, curriculum, subject and didactics, entered the European educational lexicon - and thence to the Americas, south and north. As I accumulated evidence of these innovations, I began to feel that the sixteenth century can be regarded as a turning point - albeit prolonged - in the history of European education. In a shorthand, I sometimes refer to this change as the instructional turn – a major event in the beginnings of modern schooling.

Reading *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* in the 1980s brought a fresh impetus to my thinking. It made me aware that Peter Ramus had been influential in this educational transformation. Yet, little of the subsequent literature on Ramus dwells upon the educational dimensions of Ong's argument. Instead, Ramus' historical

significance is reduced to the life and times of an argumentative professor at the University of Paris who was thrown into the Seine and lost his life in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of August 26th 1572. Mainstream Ramist scholarship, therefore, focuses on Ramus' exchanges with his peers and the implications they have for the history of philosophy, logic and rhetoric. Moreover, even Ong's left his provocations unresolved. They were merely the by-products of his life-long interest in the post-Gutenberg 'decay of dialogue'.

The opportunity to write this essay stems from the publication of *The Influence of Petrus Ramus* (Feingold, Freedman & Rother, 2001), a valuable source that both engages with Ramus' controversial ideas and, in the process, comments on analyses published since Ong's critical intervention. Papers written originally in English, German and French illustrate 'the diverse use made of Ramus both by followers and adversaries' (preface). In turn, these papers use sources in Latin, English, Czech, Swedish, Polish, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Dutch. Nevertheless, one of the contributors also cautions that, after four decades, Ong's original work has 'yet to be superseded' (Boran, 2001, p. 178n).

Finally, the justification for writing this essay has been reflexive. To study the innovations associated with Ramus' name is not merely to study the beginnings of modern schooling through a rear view mirror; it is also to turn the mirror on ourselves and the logic of schools in the twenty-first century. As Muller (2000, preface) suggests, to reflect on Ramus and his querulous contemporaries is also to reflect on - or through - the modernist language, practices or 'grammar' (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) of schooling that shapes our practices - as it shaped theirs.

Ramus the obscure

Any attempt to assess the educational contribution of Peter Ramus must also evaluate the work of Walter J. Ong (b. 1912), a Jesuit from Missouri. My own view is that Ong has played a contradictory role in the historiography of modern schooling. His efforts have highlighted Ramus' educational contribution but, at the same time, they have attenuated further discussion.

Ong came into contact with Marshall McLuhan while attending St Louis University. McLuhan, whose own doctorate (Cambridge University, 1943) had focused on the history of ideas in sixteenth century, supervised Ong's master's dissertation and the source of Ong's 'initial interest' in Ramus's ideas (Ong, 1958, preface). Later, Ong became a graduate student of history at Harvard and enjoyed an academic sojourn in Paris gathering material for *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue*.

Ong's work at that time had three noteworthy features. His historical training gave him a research focus - the educational 'reforms' moulded by Ramus and marketed by his 'thousands of followers' across central and Northwest Europe. His contact with McLuhan fostered a 'hunch' that Ramus' reforms 'registered a major shift in consciousness…from the ancient and medieval world into the modern' (preface, paperback edition, 1983). And his earlier and continuing training as a Jesuit coincided with a resurgence of interest in the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (see Farrell,

2000, p. 40). Together, these provided well-sharpened probes (e.g. Latin, medieval philosophy) that enabled Ong toto explore the intellectual transition from the scholasticism of the Middle Ages to the humanism of the Renaissance and Reformation.

Stated simply, Ong built his argument around an historical rupture – the invention of moveable-type printing. Ramus' work, that is, arose from the convergence of moveable-type printing with humanist writings about communication, learning and teaching. Moveable-type printing made it possible to replace the verbal layout of an argument with the functionally-equivalent layout, mise en page or spacialized disposition of the printed page. At the risk of oversimplification, soundless textbooks replaced, Ong felt, the articulate teacher. The final paragraph of *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* encapsulates this idea: Ramus 'furthered the elimination of sound and voice from man's understanding of the intellectual world and helped create within the human spirit itself the silences of a spatialized universe' (p. 318). Like Paulo Freire's attention to liberation theology and conscientização (Freire, 1970), Walter Ong's life-long interest has also been theological - the restitution of human spirituality through 'person-to-person communing' (see Farrell, 2000, p. 33-34).

Nevertheless, Ong's view of moveable-type printing has been challenged in an *American Historical Review* symposium (2002). McLuhan's speculation that printing transformed the western psyche is described, by Anthony Grafton, as 'quirky', a judgment that, through guilt by association, is extended to the 'much more erudite' Walter Ong (Grafton, 2002, p. 85). After Grafton's introduction, the symposium comprises an exchange between Elizabeth Eisenstein and Adrian Johns over: *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communication and cultural transformations in early modern Europe* (Eisenstein, 1979) and *The Nature of the Book: Print and knowledge in the making* (Johns, 1998). Throughout, the symposium is animated by two historical questions: is technological determinism a valid explanation of social change? And how revolutionary was the print revolution (the title of the symposium)?

Since the 1950s, the history of moveable-type printing has moved from studies of 'communication' (cf. Ong and Eisenstein) to the analysis of the mutually-constitutive practices of writers, printers, book-sellers, translators and proof-readers who, collectively, are implicated in the organisation and use of communication technologies (cf. Johns). As Eisenstein acknowledged, the historical issue is analogous to disputes around the claim 'guns don't kill people, people do' (2002, p.89). Johns position is that technology does not create knowledge but, rather, that people become knowing in new ways through their interaction with, and participation in, new technologies. In short, causality is a non-linear process. With the passage of the years, therefore, the stereotypical variant of Ong's rupture thesis - that moveable-type printing brought about the replacement of 'the art of discourse' by the 'art of reason'- has been overshadowed by analyses, like Johns', which hold that technologies are as much socio-cultural systems as they are technical systems.

Nevertheless, an ironic feature of *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* is that

Ong's erudition identified a source of such socio-cultural mediation – the contemporaneous pedagogical phenomena that enveloped the decay of dialogue and the rise of reason. These mediations feature in the chapter titles and subheadings of *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (viz. 'Ramus as teacher and writer', as 'The pedagogical juggernaut', 'philosophy as pedagogy', 'The teacher: man between two worlds', 'dialectic to didactic', and 'dialogue, dialectic, disputes, and pedagogy'). Indeed, the prominence that Ong gave to pedagogic issues led one of its original reviewers - the historian, R.R. Bolger - to described *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* as 'the most important book on the history of sixteenth century education that anyone has yet been able to write' (back cover, paperback edition, 1983).

Such erudition, however, evoked its own problems. Ong not only quoted extensively from Latin sources, he also uses a specialist language drawn from Aristotelian philosophy, syllogistic logic, classical oratory and humanist rhetoric. As an educationist with little Latin and no Greek, I initially found *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* an impenetrable text. Yet, from the outset, I admired Ong's educational sophistication. I appreciated his characterisation that Ramus' ideas were midwife to a pedagogical juggernaut rather like the industrial notions that idealised teacher-proof curricula in the twentieth century (see Hamilton, 1986); I respected his hesitation over the impact of humanism on pedagogic practice in the early sixteenth century; and I valued his insight that, in their admiring recourse to 'the ancients', humanist authors not only 'fouled their own trails' (1958, p. 92) but also masked their own impact on the logic of the schools.

Ong's own arguments were difficult to follow, yet I found his insights engagingly seductive. I, too, searched out the Ramus trail, its highways and byways. Along the way, I was greatly helped by Lisa Jardine's *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the art of discourse* (1974), Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine's *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the liberal arts in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europé* (1986), Brian Copenhaver and Charles Schmitt's *Renaissance Philosophy* (1992), Peter Mack's *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the traditions of Rhetoric and dialectic* (1993), Erika Rummel's *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (1995), Ann Moss' *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (1996), and Howard Hotson's, *Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588-1638; Between Renaissance, Reformation and universal reform* (2000). Their arguments gave me a sense of a bigger picture - that Ramus' work was deeply implicated in the creation of an instructional technology - or regime of practice - that underpinned the beginnings of modern schooling. In the process, too, I began to understand why Ramus has remained - or more accurately, been kept - beyond the horizons of mainstream educationists.

Obscuring Ramus

Ramus' obscurity within education arises, I suggest, from two sources: problems within the field of educational history and problems within Ramist scholarship. The problem with educational history has been the uncritical stance of educationists, while the problem with Ramist scholarship has been its narrowness and elitism.

The uncritical stance taken by educational historians was the starting point for Grafton and Jardine's *From Humanism to the Humanities* (1986). The history of education, they suggested, comprised a genre 'composed by antiquaries, purchased by retired historians, and read by almost nobody' (p. xi).

Grafton & Jardine continued, further down the page:

> The very iconoclasts whose archival research has shattered hallowed clichés about the clientèle and character of schools and universities have uncritically repeated every received platitude about what teachers thought and students learned. And they have failed to confront the complementary evidence - as rich as that of the matriculation records - preserved in textbooks, student notes and theses. (p. xi-xii)

Indeed, nearly twenty years later, an Oxford historian noted the same phenomenon - that the history of learning has been an 'academic backwater' (Thomas, 2003, p. 38).

To use Johns' formulations, Grafton and Jardine argued against the existence of a 'foundation of certainty' about the inner life of schools that, somehow, remained 'outside history' (Johns, 1998, pp. 11, 19). Instead, they emphasised that teaching and learning have their own histories and that, as a result, there is a difference between the history of education practice and the history of educational ideas. They highlighted, therefore, the contrast between the 'strongly held ideal views' gleaned from humanist writings, and the 'reality which is educational practice' that marked the horizons of humanist educators. They applied to the 'social historian' of the Renaissance the same criticism that Ong had applied to the Humanists' view of 'the ancients'; namely:

> Like the humanists they study, whose words they often echo faithfully, they assume the barbarity and obsolescence of medieval education and the freshness and liberality of humanism. The new system, they hold, offered such vistas of intellectual and spiritual freedom as to make it irresistible. (1986 p. xii)

The narrowness of recent Ramist scholarship is identified by Guido Oldrini, one of the contributors to *The Influence of Petrus Ramus* (2001):

> Ramism has not been studied widely, except among a small group of specialized historians of ideas, with limited interest in philosophy, and who failed to transcend the boundaries of their field of study. Ramism appears to consist of logical and rhetorical techniques used in the declining phases of the Renaissance, while Ramus' broader influence has not been recognised....Ramus has been principally considered in a negative way, a controversial figure...who broke away from Aristotelian ways of thinking. Attention must to (sic) be given to the positive aspects of Ramus' work, and in particular to his method. (p. 214)

Oldrini, like Ong, Grafton, and Jardine, accepted that it was Ramus' 'broader influence' that took Europe by storm. Ramus' contribution to educational history

cannot, therefore, be characterised merely in terms of 'logical and rhetorical techniques'. Rather, it must also be seen in terms of Ramus' method, its impact on the logic of the schools, and the 'demands of practical pedagogy' (Ong, 1958, p. 306).

Ong's foremost contribution was to recognise that there is an intimate relation between reasoning about the organisation of knowledge and reasoning about the logic of the schools.

> There was, to be sure, a certain structuring given to knowledge and to reality by a reasoned or scientific framework, but not independently of a structured educational world which, in the Renaissance as in the Middle Ages, regarded logic or dialectic as an adjunct to teaching rather than of privately undertaken abstract thinking. (1958, p. 306).

In other words, Ong claimed that a relationship exists between the mapping of knowledge and accomplishment of instruction. Each assumes the other; and the history of education should take full account of this interplay.

My final observation regarding the obscuring of Ramus points to the elitism that can be found in recent Ramist scholarship. Knowledge about Ramist ideas is given priority over Ramus' influence on practice. By default, Ramism is considered a deviant and, as Oldrini commented, 'principally considered in a negative way'. Ramus' contributions to practice are evaluated negatively against high humanist ideals attributed to other humanists. His contribution to European thought, therefore, is deemed to be substandard because it did not meet the canons of universal learning that historians of humanism have chosen to attribute to the sixteenth century.

This jaundiced view of Ramus can also be discerned in *The Influence of Petrus Ramus*. Viz.:

- Ramus' initiatives were 'didactically-motivated' (p. 18)
- His followers were not philosophers but, rather, 'first and foremost' teachers (p. 25)
- He advanced a 'pedagogical project which would best produce an efficient curriculum when no time was wasted on hair-splitting questions' (pp.124-125)
- His focus was with 'teaching not with thinking' (cited, p.131)
- His eponymous innovation (the Ramist method) merely offered a 'semblance of universal learning' (p. 138); and
- The 'intellectual impoverishment' of his 'petty [small] compendia' was to become the 'scourge of learning' (p. 159).

In short, Ramus should be remembered as a second-rate thinker and, therefore, should not figure in the educational record of the 1500s. Yet, these retrospective judgements can be challenged using the same quotations. Ramus' 'eponymous innovation' was a marketing triumph. He formalised a body of received knowledge, wasting no time on 'hair-splitting questions'. He re-framed this derived body of knowledge as an 'efficient

curriculum' linked to 'teaching not thinking'; and, to use a metaphor of the 21st century, he sold this killer application (a juggernaut of 'petty compendia') to an international network of 'didactically-minded' practitioners. Ramus' philosophical weakness was, therefore, his educational strength - a paradox that Grafton & Jardine highlighted in 1986:

> It is only possible to make sense of the *sucès fou* [crazy success] of Ramism within arts institutions across Europe if one concedes that by 1550 'humanism' had become 'the humanities' (and their teaching). It is with their treatment of Ramus and Ramism, we suggest, that traditional historians of humanism fail in the end to give a satisfactory account. They insist on the banality and triteness of Ramus' intellectual contribution to the liberal arts. But that *is* the version of liberal arts teaching that 'caught on' and left its indelible trace on Western European thought. For historians of humanism, Ramus is a blot on the sixteenth century intellectual landscape; for historians of education he heralds the age of standardised classroom teaching and the best-selling textbook. (p. 162, quotation abridged)

Recovering Ramus

Grafton & Jardine's reference to textbooks also provides a convenient starting point for the recovery of Ramus' place in the history of education. Then, as now, a textbook had two distinct characteristics: its content and its form. A textbook is not merely a compendium of knowledge. Rather, it is a *assemblage* of knowledge *organised* for educational purposes. Textbooks, therefore, are not simply depositories of knowledge. Through their chapters, headings. tables, illustrations, worked examples, homework exercises, and so on, they mediate the structure of knowledge on the one hand, and the performance of teaching and learning on the other. They are a condensation, therefore, of both knowledge and instruction. At the same time, however, textbooks contain a deep contradiction. They are *today's* mediation of *yesterday's* knowledge in the light of educational projections about *tomorrow*.

Ramus' role as a mediator was analogous. He aroused the wrath of other humanists because his reshaping - for tomorrow - of earlier practices was not universally accepted. 'On the whole' Rummel suggests, humanists debated what should be inherited from the medieval past and transmitted to future generations. In the process, however, 'sixteenth century protagonists presented themselves more often as aggressive polemicists than as gentlemen scholars' (1995, p. 41).

To appreciate the form and content of these debates, it is convenient to start with the so-called *trivium*, the triad of topics - grammar, dialectic and rhetoric - that served at the lower tier of the Seven Liberal Arts. These categories, personified as the seven daughters of philosophy, comprised 'the rational endeavours of man' (Katzenellenbogen, 1966, pp. 47 &.39). To become rational beings, learners should acquire such knowledge. In discussions of the trivium, dialectic is sometimes given an alternative label – logic; but, as indicated in the remainder of this paper, medieval

logic was not the same as humanist dialectic.

Knowledge and Communication

The Liberals Arts comprised yesterdays learning that was to be learned by tomorrow's male adults. The Liberal Arts were self-referential. They were both structured bodies of knowledge and structured instruments for the communication of knowledge. To learn *from* previous knowledge was also to learn *through* previous knowledge. At the same time, however, the structure of the Liberal Arts was ill-defined. They were fluid rather than fixed bodies of knowledge and, as a result, their form as communication media was equally imprecise. They were more texts than textbooks.

The same argument applies to the trivium. It is more easily understood as an amorphous stage of learning than as a handy set of tools for learning. Collectively, grammar, dialectic and rhetoric related to knowledge about - and for - human communication. Grammar was the chassis of communication, and dialectic and rhetoric comprised knowledge about how the bodywork of communication should be moulded and finished. If knowledge of grammar fostered the ability to write or speak Latin, dialectic and rhetoric underpinned the capacity to produce the Latin employed in the higher arts (notably theology). Further, the history of the trivium is a history of how such 'good' Latin was characterised as a body of knowledge to be learned, from and through.

Then, as now, learning a language was more than learning formal grammar. It also included the appreciation of vocabulary and word order. To this extent, grammar spilled over into the other elements of the trivium. If grammar involved stringing words together, dialectic involved stringing propositions together to make plausible (or logical) arguments and rhetoric involved stringing words and propositions together so that an argument also became persuasive. Overall, the trivium embraced the stringing of words together to create arguments that were both plausible (dialectic) and persuasive (rhetoric).

As suggested, the fortunes of the language arts waxed and waned in the humanist-scholastic debate. Medieval scholasticism, for instance, was an expression of the dominance of logic and, with it, the importance attached to argumentation. Attention to argumentation, reasoning, logic and truth - also known as aristotelian logic (because it was based on certain texts attributed to Aristotle) - had been the core theological activity of the latter part of the Middle Ages (1150-1450).

The search for logical rigour included attention to textual detail, identification of the shortcomings of earlier commentators, invention of more precise terms and the re-calibration of earlier categories of thought. Indeed, much of the secondary historical literature on the trivium, including the doctoral work of Walter Ong, has been taken up with untangling the twists and turns of this so-called scholastic enterprise.

The language arts of the Renaissance - 'Renaisance argument' in Mack's terms - arose from authors interested in the power of persuasion as well as the logic of argumentation. They, too, focused on the use of language but, in the process,

highlighted the impact of classical prose and poetry on grammar and rhetoric. Such early humanists accepted the merits of dialectic (or logical analysis), provided it was used as a basis for oratory, and not as an end in itself. The incursion of oratory, however, promoted the claims of rhetoric. Peter Mack succinctly describe the link between rhetoric and oratory:

> The full course in rhetoric teaches many different skills, for example: how to think about an audience, how to begin an oration, how to relate a story, how to determine the main points at issue, how to devise and formulate arguments, in what order to place the parts of an oration, how to determine which style to employ and how to write it, how to conclude, how to deliver, and how to arouse the emotions of an audience. (1993, p. 5).

Overall, the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance supported innovators as well as formalists who, in their different ways, derived 'all things from the ancients' (Ong, 1958, p. 92). The innovations of the humanists Lorenzo Valla (1407- 1457) and Rudolph Agricola (1444-1485) can be seen in this light. Valla's work (e.g. *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae,* 1439) focused on grammar as the foundation of the trivium. By grammar, however, Valla denoted a thorough knowledge of both the language and the literature of ancient Greek and Latin. The acquisition of this language art was, for Valla, 'fundamental' (Mack, 1993, p. 96).

In effect, Valla reworked dialectic - the word *repastinatio* can be interpreted as 're-laying', 'ploughing in' or 're-digging' of the 'foundations of tradtional logic'(Rummel, 1995, p. 156). He called argumentation back from the trickery of philosophical language and the disputation of eternal truths. He redirected it back to natural language, to the elegant organisation of phrases and sentences, and to the practical purposes of persuasion. He realigned it as a practical art whose form and content should vary according to its context of use (e.g. court room, senate chamber, burial ground). He took elements from both grammar and rhetoric and merged them. Dialectic took its content from grammar and its form from rhetoric. Ancient texts provided the raw material of argumentation; while rhetoric entailed shaping the form and expression of arguments. In the process, the perceived narrowness of Aristotelian logic was displaced from humanist dialectic, debate and argumentation. As Mack suggested, the humanist view was that 'where philosophical language obfuscates, rhetorical language illuminates' (Mack, 1933, p. 26).

Agricola's seminal work, *De inventione dialectica* (1479), came later. It was a text which rethought 'the classical heritage of persuasion in the light of a deep and careful reading of Latin literature' (Mack, 1993, p. 120). If Valla had incorporated grammar and rhetoric into dialectic - enlarging it in the process, Agricola completed his predecessors work. For Agricola, the language art of dialectic entailed speaking convincingly, 'according to the situation of the thing proposed' (quoted in Mack, 1993, p. 170). Further, Agricola differentiated between speaking convincingly and speaking clearly. The latter was the province of grammar - finding appropriate words; whereas dialectic embraced the organisation of speech in particular ways and for particular purposes. Through this distinction, Agricola forged a direct connection between dialectic, teaching

and, another field beyond the purview of this paper, preaching:

> When someone teaches in such a way that he wants to create belief through his speech, and to draw the mind of the hearer to him by what he says…he is dealing with the business of dialectic. (quoted in Mack, 1993, p. 173)

There is a further important feature of Agricola's view of dialectic. As Ong noted, Agricola's dialectic was 'concerned more with how to deal with an audience than with strict logical structure' (Ong, 1958, p. 100). In other words, the psychology of teaching was as important as assuring the logic of an argument.

Dialectic became the paradigmatic language art - argumentation. Gradually, however, something seems to have happened in the middle of the sixteenth century that changed the face of education. A gap opened up between teachings and teaching. As suggested earlier, to learn argumentation was, somehow, to learn about teaching. Argumentation, therefore, could be appreciated as a mental, inside-the-head activity (cf. thinking), or it could be thought of an external activity of speaking and writing (cf. debating). Accordingly, dialectic acquired, Ong suggested, a 'curious double-teaching charge' that was 'characteristic of Ramism':

> Like every other art, it is teaching (*doctrina*) by the very fact that it is an art (*ars*), but it is further the art or teaching of teaching' (Ong, 1958, p. 161).

This view was typified in a later comment on Ramus' proposals: 'speech teaches; reason learns; therefore dialectic is the art of teaching and learning' (Johann Piscator, quoted in Rummel, 1995, p. 174; for further discussion see Ong, 1958, p. 161). Models of learning or self-instruction became models for instruction. A model for acquiring knowledge (learning) became a model for communicating knowledge (dialectic) and a model for transmitting knowledge (instruction). The language arts or humanism were, in Ramist circles, transformed into the instructional arts of the humanities.

This double-teaching charge - or the translation of teachings into teaching - is also probed by the question: who were the readers of *De inventione dialectica?* Was it written as a guide to self-study? Was it prepared for guided self-study (i.e. domestic tutoring)? Or was it a book to be placed unambiguously in the hands of school keepers? Again, Ong notes the fluidity of this issue, insofar as. Agricola's text:

> might well be headed 'What Boys Should Know about Discourse' or, better, since it is addressed to teachers rather than to pupils, 'Thoughts on Discourse and How to Teach it' (Ong 1968, p. 100)

Printing houses were also sensitive to this problem, a factor which underpinned the Ramist publishing triumph. Ong, for instance, distinguishes the 'pupil-centred' stance adopted by the humanists (whose texts were accommodated 'to "real-life" and to the real pedagogical situation') from the 'teacher-oriented' attitude taken within the aristotelean, lecturing milieux that survived in certain universities (Ong, 1958, p. 97) -

often those with links to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

Ramus: reaction and continuation

Although Ramus was born after Agricola's death, their professional lives were much closer. Few people read Agricola during his lifetime. His work lay on the ragged cusp between the production of hand-written medieval manuscripts and the production of Renaissance printed books. Nevertheless, he is remembered as 'the logician of the new age' (1958, p. 94).

From 1515 - the year of Ramus' birth - Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* began to circulate widely, becoming 'one of the most often printed dialectic books of the sixteenth century', reaching a 'peak between 153o and 1544 (Mack, 1993, pp. 257, 172). Ong suggests that Ramus' later historical importance arose from his 'reaction to - or, rather, his continuation of - Agricola's dialectic' (Ong, 1958, p. 21). What, however, was this reaction and continuation? Agricola's model of dialectic entailed two practices: invention (*inventio*) and judgement (*iudicium*), although his writings did not reach the latter. The former related to the identification or, more literally, the coming together of the different propositions of an argument; while judgement related to assessing the logical validity of the assembled argument. Together, these activities might be described as establishing whether an argument *sounds* right.

Ramus' reaction (or contribution) was to replace this aural analogy with a visual metaphor. Does the argument *look* right - in terms of its layout or 'disposition"? Through this substitution, the word *dispositio* came to replace the word *iudicium*. Later, Ramus followed Valla's sense of *repastinatio*. He reworked Agricola's ideas about *inventio* and *iudicium,* and annexed an old term, *method*, that was undergoing its own ploughing over in the Renaissance. Underpinning this substitution of method for disposition was a new idea - that a method is a short cut, an efficient way to proceed (see Gilbert, 1960, *passim*). Further, this notion of method as a shortcut rather than an elaborate recipe, became annexed to ideas about teaching as the efficient transmission of knowledge. In 1539, for instance, Sturm distinguished an art of teaching from a method of instruction:

> An art is an abundant collection of propositions and general observations looking to some useful end in life. But in this abundance and in setting up the various arts a certain, short, and direct way, a kind of short cut, has to be use, which is simple, and clear, and straightforward. This the Greeks call method (*methodus*) and teaching procedure (*didascalia*), such as may be used for teaching and communicating. (in Ong, 1958, p. 232-233)

Indeed, Ong hints at another factor in this a decay of dialogue. The Latin word *docere* can mean to teach, but it also means to show or make manifest (as in document). Ong suggests that this affinity not only led to the documentation of teachings (i.e. the compilation of textbooks) but also to the documentation of teaching as a 'classroom performance' that follows a particular method, and can be performed anywhere. This universalism was the source of Ramus' impact. He took ideas already associated with dialectic and transposed them into a form that could be easily communicated in textual

versions (Ong, 1958, p. 159-160). Starting with a map of knowledge, Ramus reduced such knowledge into a tree of knowledge, using repeated binary division. Moreover, in mediating philosophic knowledge on the one hand and pedagogic practice on the other hand, such trees had a double order. The tree of knowledge reflected the received order of things while the branches of the tree - its *materia subjecta* (McLean, 2001, p. 235) - foreshadowed the natural order of instruction.

The non-linear transformation of the language arts into instructional methods deserves further attention. Nevertheless, the mutual impact of a change, on the one hand, from learning to instruction and, on the other hand, from recipe to method, can be discerned in sources collated by Mack and Ong. Mack uses the writings of a noted humanist, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560). At the age of twenty one, Melanchthon was appointed professor of Greek at Wittenberg where he began revising the prevailing courses in rhetoric and dialectic under the influence of Agricola's writings. These revisions correspond to the translation of the language arts into the instructional arts and, crudely, can be traced out in the imagery of 'to speak', 'discussing' and 'learning correctly', that Melanchthon used in his writing between 1519 and 1547 (see Mack, 1993, pp. 326-327):

> Dialectic is the precise and methodological investigation of any theme which is proposed. Thus, if you have to speak about duty, the art requires that you first present a definition of duty, then you lay out the parts. If you compare the parts with each other, some are consonant with duty, some opposed to it (1519).
>
> Dialectic is the art of discussing any theme in a relevant and suitable way. It shows the nature and parts of any theme simply, and describes the proposed them in such clear words that the audience cannot fail to understand what it contains, whether it is true or false. (1520)
>
> Dialectic is the art or method of teaching correctly, clearly, and in order, about all subjects or questions which man should be taught.It involves defining and dividing, connecting up true arguments and picking apart false ones. (1547)

Besides focusing on the question of method, Ong also provides sources (1958, p. 160) to suggest that these views not only survived into the seventeenth century but also began to echo Ramus' argument about method (the 'instrument of knowing') and about the order of knowledge ('correctly, in order'):

> Dialectic is the art of passing on skill in knowing, and consequently teaching the instrument of knowing.
> (Alsted, *Clavis artis Lullianae*, 1609)
>
> Logic is the art of teaching about anything, correctly, in order and clearly.
> (Conrad Deckher, *Logica Philippo-Ramea*, 1620)

Ramus' Marvel Summarised

This paper, which began life as an essay review of *The Influence of Petrus Ramus* (2001), reports nearly two centuries of instruction in the making. Starting with the liberal arts, which came to prominence in the Middle Ages, it sketches the changes that occurred between 1450 and 1650. In addition, it links these developments to insights about the humanist Peter Ramus generated by Walter Ong in *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue*. Finally, the paper indicates why Ramus' work has suffered at the hands of nineteenth and twentieth century humanist scholarship.

Ramus played a role in reforming the logic of the schools to the same degree that Valla and Agricola reformed the logic of self-instruction. Ramus took teachings inherited from the past. He documented them in a form that responded both to inherited maps of knowledge and to the humanist educational agenda of the 1500s. This documentation, which came to be known as a curriculum (a map of knowledge based on a different projection), could be disposed - or layed out – so that it also comprised a method - or way - of teaching.

Ramus' contribution was, as Brockliss suggests, to insist that dialectic was 'merely the practical art of locating and marshalling evidence'. Accordingly:

> Ramus paid no attention to the customary distinction between rhetoric and logic and concentrated on developing a simple procedural dialectic which could be used as a tool in either the investigation or the transmission of knowledge. (Brockliss, 1996, p. 581)

Ramus' 'preoccupation with usefulness' (Mack, 1993, p. 354), a continuation of Agricola's stance, found a ready audience. With the assistance of commentaries written by notable school rectors in Freiberg and Marburg (McLean, 1990, p. 258), Ramus expanded the horizons of teachers interested in the language arts. The breadth of his appeal was profound, if only because he advertised a technology that could be applied, ultimately, to the teaching of anything. Jill Kraye captures the profundity of Ramus' contribution to the learning economy of the Renaissance and Reformation:

> Perhaps the most ambitious practitioner of the [Ramist] method was Georg Andreas Fabricius, who reduced the whole of philosophy to Ramist-style tables, conveniently arranged so that students, by mastering one a day, would acquire all human knowledge in little over a year. (Kraye, 1995, p. 110)

While the marketing claims of Ramists should be treated with caution, and while the impact of Ramus' work in the schoolroom can only be the subject of speculation, his impact on schoolbooks has been widely documented, not least by Ong (1958, chapter 13 - 'the diffusion of Ramism'). Prior to Ramus, students studied texts that comprised different permutations of the form and content of works by classical authors and /or their translators and publishers. With procedures popularised by a community of Ramists, the form and content of such texts stabilised. Students could begin to study 'subjects' gathered together into encyclopedia or packaged separately as textbooks. The transition from text to textbooks did not, of course, take place overnight. Texts survived, even as

textbooks took shape. Equally, the organisation of texts with teaching in mind was not the monopoly of Ramus' and his humanist colleagues. Mise en scène considerations also permeated the preparation of medieval manuscripts, if not to the same degree as in the post-Gutenberg era (see Hamilton, 2002).

As implied in the epigraph, Ong's analysis of Ramus was unfinished. And, as suggested in this paper, the unfinished qualities of *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* have deprived educationists of access to Ong's insights. This paper is also unfinished but, nevertheless, it can be read both as a belated homage to Walter Ong and as a supplementary comment on the logic of the schools - then, as well as now.

Bibliography

Boran, E. (2001). Ramus in Trinity College, Dublin in the early seventeenth century. In M. Feingold *et. al.* (pp. 177-199).

Brockliss, L. (1996). Curriculum. In H. De Ridder-Symoens (ed.) *Universities in Early Modern Europé (1500-1800)* [vol 2 of *A history of the University in Europe*, W. Ruegg, general editor, pp. 563-620]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Charlton, K. (1965). *Education in Renaissance England.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Copenhaver, B.P. & Schmitt, C.B. (1992). *Renaissance Philosphy* (vol. 3 of A History of Western Philosophy). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Curtis, S.J. & Boultwood, M.E.A. (1953). *A Short History of Educational Ideas.* London: University Tutorial Press.

Eisenstein, E.L. (1979). *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communication and cultural transformations in early modern Europe.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eisenstein, E.L. (2002) An unacknowledged revolution revisited. *The American Historical Review. 107 (1),* 87-105.

Farrell, Thomas J. (2000). *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The phenomenology of the word and I-thou communication.* Cresskill NJ: Hampton Press.

Feingold, M. Freedman, J.S. & Rother, W. (eds.) (2001). *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in sixteenth and seventeenth century philosophy and sciences.* Basel: Schwabe.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Myra Bergman Ramus, trans.). New York: Continuum.

Gilbert, N.W. (1960). *Renaissance Concepts of Method.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Grafton, A. (2002). How revolutionary was the print revolution? *The American Historical Review. 107 (1),* 84-86.

Grafton, A. & Jardine, L. (1986). *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the liberal arts in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe*. London: Duckworth.

Hamilton, D. (1986). The pedagogical Juggernaut. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 35(1),* 18-29.

Hamilton, D. (1989). *Towards a Theory of Schooling.* London: Falmer.

Hamilton, D. (2001). Notes from nowhere: on the beginnings of modern schooling. In T.S: Popkewitz, B.M. Franklin & M.A. Pereyra (eds.) *Cultural History and Education: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Schooling* (pp. 187-206). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Hamilton, D. (2002). From dialectic to didactic. *Paradigm, 2* (5), 15-24.

Hotson, H. (2000). *Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation and universal reform*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jardine, L. (1974). *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the art of discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johns, A. (1998). *The Nature of the Book: Print and knowledge in the making.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Katzanellenbogen, A. (1966). The representation of the seven liberal arts. In M. Clagett, G. Post & R. Reynolds (eds.) *Twelfth-Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society* (pp. 39-55). Madison WI: University of Madison Press.

Kraye, J. (1995). Renaissance commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics. In O. Weigers (ed.) *Vocabulary of Teaching and Research Between Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Etudes sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du Moyen Age, vol vii, pp. 96-115). Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

Laurie, S.S. (1904). *Studies in the History of Educational Oopinion from the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mack, P. (1993). *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the traditions of rhetoric and dialectic.* Leiden: Brill.

Maclean, I. (1990). Philosophical books in European markets 1570-1630: The case of Ramus. In J. Henry & S. Hutton (eds.) *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the history of science, education and philosophy* (pp. 253-263). London: Duckworth.

Maclean, I. (2001). Logical division and visual dichotomies: Ramus in the context of legal and medical writings. In M. Feingold *et. al.* (pp. 228-247).

Monroe, P. (1908). *A Textbook in the History of Education.* New York: Macmillan.

Moss, Ann (1996). *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Muller, J. (2000). *Reclaiming Knowledge: Social theory, curriculum and educational*

policy. London: Routledge/Falmer.

Oldrini, G. (2001). The influence of Ramus' method on historiography and jurisprudence. In M. Feingold *et. al.* (pp. 215-227).

Ong, W. J. (1958). *Ramus, Method and the Decay of dialogue: From the art of discourse to the art of reason.* London: Harvard University Press.

Quick, R.H. (1898). *Essays on Educational* Reformers. London: Longmans.

Rummel, E. (1995). *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation.* London: Harvard University Press.

Thomas, K. (2003). Heroes of history. *New York Review of Books, March 13th, . 38-40.*

Woodward, W.H. (1897). *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Reformers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(the end)

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Instruction in the making: Peter Ramus and the beginnings of modern schooling	
Author(s): David Hamilton	
Corporate Source: Umeå University, Sweden	Publication Date: 03/08/1999

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: DJ Hamilton	Printed Name/Position/Title: Prof	
Organization/Address: Dept. of Education, Umeå University	Telephone: +46 90 786 6564	FAX: +46 90 786 7800
	E-Mail Address: david.hamilton @ pedag.umu.se	Date: 8 April 2003